

Victoria Street Newz

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Volume 7,
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*"All the news that fits,
we print"*

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A Poverty Reduction Strategy for Victoria?

by Chris Johnson

**Thousands showed up May 8th
to support Alexandra Morton
after her 16 day walk along
Vancouver Island in an effort
to Save The Salmon.**



In last month's *Street Newz* I told you that a Victoria City Councillor had proposed the idea of a municipal Poverty Reduction Strategy. At that time I asked you to contact members of council and urge them to make a commitment to reducing poverty in this region.

Well, if you're one of those eager *Street Newz* readers who gets their copy of this paper as soon as it comes out, you may still have a chance to urge council to make poverty reduction one of its top issues for the rest of its term.

Council will be meeting on May 31 for a special priority setting meeting, at which time they will consider the idea of a poverty reduction plan. If you haven't already emailed or phoned the Victoria City Councillors, now is the time.

Even if it's well into June, whether Council adopts poverty reduction as a top priority or not, you and I know the ongoing importance of poverty reduction, and that it's never too late to make your voice heard on this issue. We must continue to keep the pressure on all levels of government (have you called Gordon Campbell this week?) to take meaningful action on poverty.

Governments have an important role in reducing poverty, but the responsibility is not fully theirs. These are our communities, our lives, our neighbours, and we have a responsibility to work together to make our community the kind of place we can feel good about raising our children in. We have to start by realizing what poverty is, and what it means to reduce poverty.

Poverty is not simply a lack of money. Many of us who live in poverty do not see our situation as being simply the need to acquire more money.

... continued on page three ...

About *Street Newz*

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Founded in 2004,
Victoria Street Newz welcomes written submissions including personal stories, interviews, event reviews, cartoons, poetry, photographs, or artwork, but we can't guarantee everything will be published. We reserve the right to edit, and will not print anything libelous, racist, sexist, or homophobic. Letters sent to the editor are assumed to be for publication, must include phone number or email (if possible, for confirmation) and may be edited for length. You can publish using a pseudonym, or anonymously.

We are devoted to a triple bottom line philosophy - concerned about our environmental and social, as well as financial, well-being.

You can contribute to social change by supporting the *Victoria Street Newz* team, by pondering the root causes of poverty, and by working for peaceful, non-violent change.

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just another rant

janinebandcroft.blogspot.com

It's a soggy spring morning in Victoria and, while I celebrate the life affirming heavenly rains, I can't help but think of our many earthbound sisters and brothers who live outside. I think of them often, wonder how many more have joined their ranks every time I hear of another government funding cutback removing arts opportunities, health care, education, and social programs. But rather than sink into a deep mire of depression, easily instigated by the dim global picture – the exploding oil project in the Gulf of Mexico, the re-colonization of Arizona - I'm going to choose to heed Wendy Pedersen's words and celebrate our successes, however small.

Wendy Pedersen is a Vancouver based grassroots activist and organizer employed with the Carnegie Community Action Project (CCAP) situated in a busy community centre and library building at the corner of Hastings and Main, deep in the heart of the Downtown East Side (DTES). On a sunny Sunday, the day after she'd journeyed across the pond to participate in Alexandra Morton's walk to the Legislature to Save the Salmon, Wendy met with some Victoria based activists to share knowledge, discuss, strategize, and celebrate.

Wendy works with Jean Swanson, author of Poor-Bashing: The Politics of Exclusion. Jean ran for Mayor against Gordon Campbell, and she was involved in the fight for the Carnegie community centre back in the days when the DTES was described as "skid row," a "rat hole" not worth throwing money into. Jean now volunteers her days at CCAP where she and Wendy (and countless others concerned about the plight of their neighbourhood) fight a tsunami of gentrification. Wendy describes Jean as "a miracle."

Gentrification, according to Wikipedia, is "the sociocultural changes in an area resulting from wealthier people buying housing property in a less prosperous community," and it's a common concern across North America. In response a "Right to the City" movement is growing momentum, challenging the notion that moving rich people into poor neighbourhoods raises the living standards of all. Research and social networking indicates that gentrification feeds a divide and rule mentality and pushes lower income residents out of their neighbourhoods and onto the streets. City Hall, Wendy insists, has the power to stop gentrification through, for example, luxury taxes and empty building taxes.

In addition to slowing condominium development in Vancouver's DTES, CCAP is advocating a raise in welfare rates. Wendy pointed to any number of publicly funded projects – the roof of BC place for example – as an example of government priorities denying our society's most vulnerable. "Make no mistake," Wendy insists, "poverty and homelessness is not caused by mental illness and addiction, it's caused by poor housing supply and poor incomes."

For those of us working for systemic change, despair is never far from reach. Wendy left us with a short list of things that may inspire us, including a realization that we can't be everything to everybody, a reminder not to collaborate with "the power" (advice some of the big Enviro might ponder)

but to treat our enemies fairly, and an insistence that we celebrate our successes, no matter how small.

Wendy acknowledged the "Right to Sleep" victory. It sparked the Vancouver based Pivot Legal Society's Red Tent Campaign – a very visible and pragmatic way to raise awareness of poverty issues, and a project that's being taken to Ottawa this summer as part of a demand for funding for social housing (which hasn't existed since the mid 90s, thus explaining this country's incredible rise in homelessness). Check RedTents.org for more info on that.

In closing, Victoria's grassroots Committee To End Homelessness shared some of their accomplishments which include, in addition to helping with the court challenge, monthly "Power Lunches," Rose Henry's "Reality Tours," Tony's Trailers and the MOTHERS Project (in collaboration with a UVic based research project) to support Victoria's hard working binning community, regular attendance at City Council

and All Candidates Meetings, Stands for Housing, various rallies, and annual vigils to remember those from the street

community who have died in the previous year (about one each week). Their main concern, though, is attracting members of the street community to their meetings.

Everyone recognized the importance of consulting with "the experts," the people who live and breathe homelessness and poverty. CCAP's core group is comprised of "experts" who meet weekly, set their own agenda, and plan about one action a month – they attend urban planning meetings, organize rallies, and managed to reduce a plan for 15 thirty-story condos in the DTES to just two.

Hey, Victoria's Street Community ... why not register your place in history as more than a mere statistic. Victoria's Committee to End Homelessness (not the Mayor's group) wants you, your stories, your ideas, your expertise. At present they're meeting Wednesday nights at 7 pm at Silver Threads (though this may change). They provide food, a bit of warmth and shelter, and an opportunity to be heard without judgement. The time is now, things aren't getting any easier for any of us, and there's no guarantee that the NDP (who are currently being groomed by Big Business and the Enviro-Corps) can or will make any significant systemic changes even if they have the opportunity. See you Wednesday?



Rose is going to Chicago !!

Yes indeed, Rose Henry will be our representative at the annual NASNA (North America Street Newspaper Association - NASNA.org) conference the last weekend in July.

It's costing us just over \$1000 to send Rose to Chicago and if you can help, even a little, we'd really appreciate it. Send a cheque to the *Victoria Street Newz*, write Rose Henry in the subject line, and send it to us at 1027 Pandora V8V 3P6.

We haven't been to a NASNA conference since 2007, it's really a great opportunity to learn and share ... and Rose has a wealth of street knowledge to share! We're just delighted to be sending her - an Indigenous woman, a vendor, and an activist - to represent our little newspaper at this big conference!



Poverty Reduction Strategy continued from cover

While it is true that more money would address many, if not most of our needs, we understand that this money is not necessarily forthcoming, and for a certain percentage of the population it will never come. So it would be foolish of us to look at this money as our salvation. We have learned that where money falls short, that we have many other ways to meet our needs.

In the last century or so we have given up the reliance on ourselves and our communities, and have put faith in a global industrial economy. The dramatic decline in the amount of people growing their own food is one aspect of this. In my grandparents time, when money was tight, they still ate well, because they grew their own food. Other things in their lives, like healthcare, clothing and other goods and services, were much more available than they are now because they were able to produce and trade for things themselves.

Nowadays we are not so empowered to meet our own needs. We are dependent on a global industrial economy that is forever slouching towards its promised potential to provide for us all. With this dependence has come a loss of skills and practices that would have served us greatly as we work towards creating a society that provides equal opportunity to acquire resources (if such a thing is actually possible). With that loss of skills has come a decline in our health, education and general well-being. Where we once worked together to weather hard times, we now suffer in isolation. Where we once worked together to fill the gaps left by the inequality of the global economy, we now slowly perish while waiting for policy makers to find solutions.

When policy makers talk about poverty reduction, what they are generally addressing are barriers to acquiring wealth. While much is said about how poverty impacts individuals and families, the main implications of poverty, as presented by many of the poverty reduction plans, are the impacts on our gross domestic product through the loss of productivity of so many unemployed people. This is politically pragmatic, because it is universally palatable.

Everyone supposedly benefits from a larger GDP, so everyone can get behind the idea that reducing poverty will benefit us all. This would be more so if we had an equitable distribution of wealth, but as it stands now, 90% of the world's income is going to 5% of the people. So essentially, a case can be made that a poverty reduction plan will benefit most those who generally benefit most from a healthy economy, and will benefit everyone else in so much as the trickle down effect manages to benefit us now.

If federal and provincial plans seek to increase wages and income assistance, bring more money to education and recreation, improve working conditions, increase food security and address the housing shortage, then it would seem foolish to not support them. Where I am cautious however is that these things are also required for a smooth running global industrial economy, and are geared towards a greater participation and dependence on this economy, to the detriment of localized community self-sufficiency. Were it universally accepted that a global industrial economy was our highest achievement as a species, and met all of our needs as humans, then strengthening this system with a larger workforce and consumer base would be a no-brainer. Despite the propaganda of the media, corporations, universities and governments, this particular system, while it may be the best we've been able to manage (in some ways), it can in no way be seen as the final step in our social evolution.

One of the problems with a global capitalist economy is that it does not allow for alternatives. It either outlaws or assimilates alternatives. We have not yet reached the end of our evolution as a species. We must continue to evolve and not let ourselves be locked into the same patterns forever. We must at least be open to alternatives, and we must be able to apply those alternatives in areas where the current system falls short.

In terms of a formal governmental poverty reduction plan, municipal governments are best suited to encourage these alternatives and empower communities to fill the gaps with locally based, self-sufficient economies. Areas where a municipal government can empower people to help themselves in the absence of funding, employment, programming, etc, is by promoting food security, housing co-operatives, community health co-operatives, education and childcare co-operatives, and landlord tenant education, to name a few.

We are more than just underutilized workers and consumers in the global economy. I don't have faith that provincial and federal plans have or will reflect that, but I do think that a municipal plan can. If we need the promise of a healthy GDP to sell the plan to voters, then that's what we have to do, but I would really like to see some significant measures to empower people to not have to rely completely on a system that can not ever begin to promise opportunity to all. If a municipal plan is going to rely heavily on empowering us to be workers and consumers in the global economy (and this is almost guaranteed to be the case), then it needs to find ways to help people become self-employed or create their own small businesses.

I personally have found that self-employment has allowed me to have a more flexible schedule than the typical job, and this has been crucial to maintaining my 'mental health.. Thus I am confident that these kinds of opportunities decrease reliance on a mental health system that is dreadfully dysfunctional. (Think of that as a cost savings if you still insist on measuring success in those terms.)

As I mentioned last month, I feel we need to support the idea of all levels of government drafting poverty reduction plans, and we need to insist upon a voice in this process to make sure it provides meaningful results. At the same time we can't put all our energy into the idea of the global industrial economy providing for all our needs. We must once again become communities that are able to thrive and survive independent of these unstable political and economic forces.

And finally, Victoria isn't the only municipality in this region with poverty. If you live in Saanich or Langford or anywhere else, I urge you to contact your city council and let them know that poverty must end.

Dear Proprietors, Staff, and Vendors,

Greetings from your neighbor across the Strait.

Before me as I open is Volume 7, Issue 1 of the *Victoria Street Newz*. Page 6 carries an open invitation to share a story of survival and triumph with the *Victoria Street Newz*.

Whenever I visit the city of Victoria, I always go out of my normal course of sightseeing and tourism to seek out and buy a copy of *Victoria Street Newz* from an authorized vendor. I recognize from personal experience that not all victims of homelessness arise out of struggles with alcohol, substance abuse, or domestic violence. In my own case, all it took was a loss of political "face" and of my job in Eastern Washington.

After losing everything, my wife and I spent the winter of 2002-2003 living in our car. We were able to count our real and available friends on one hand. The supposed elite of Spokane knew explicitly of our plight. They turned tail and ran like rabbits from a lifelong resident and native of the city.

A few months later, my wife and I regained employment and an apartment to call home. I also found myself elected as Worshipful Master of York Lodge #234, Free and Accepted Masons. It was in this capacity that an opportunity fell my way to plead the case of the widow, the fatherless, the dispossessed. This was arguably the only truly useful thing I can recall doing in my entire term as presiding Worshipful Master. The attached "photo-op" was an opportunity to send two vital messages to the world:

(1) That small people ARE people too, that they do matter in the greater scheme of life.

(2) That Freemasons are NOT out as a fraternity or as individuals to subvert and blow up the world, and that there are those among us who DO care.

About the time this photo was taken of yours truly extending a hand of endorsement to the homelessness struggle, Mayor Jim West (!) was signing off a new city law which effectively barred the homeless from sleeping anywhere in the city limits of Spokane. Then he personally ordered a SWAT team out to enforce it. No arrests or casualties of any kind occurred because I cautioned the facilitator beforehand not to make any open statements or gestures of defiance. My caution was heeded, and all of the delegates in the demonstration moved on quietly to continue their struggle another day. Mayor West would eventually be recalled for unrelated reasons.

No one published the July 2004 photo, but everyone it concerned across the state of Washington saw it. This would be my last personal picture sitting in the city of my birth. My days in Spokane were numbered. A string of events at home and at work erupted and forced us to evacuate from Spokane.

To shorten the account for sake of space and any potential readers, we are now living in Port Angeles. It is a much more supportive community of the less fortunate. It has, for now, a much more protective plan in place for them. I am no longer in a position of visibility to suck reporters and satellite trucks into a media-worthy event (whatever that may mean). But I can go out of my way as an occasional visitor to your city and buy a copy of *Victoria Street Newz* along my way. I understand this helps your vendors put the pieces of a broken life back together and to move forward. May God bless you according to the sincerity of your stated mission.

Cordially,

Monte J. McCormick

p.s. The photo, taken July 5 2004, was a "staged" group sitting, but the demonstration was not. "Camp Serene Freedom" was the tentative name of the demonstration site in the downtown core of Spokane.



Hí Couz,

It's a pity that you don't live close by because you sure missed a good celebration on April 9th. We went to see the public opening of a new cultural centre for native peoples out at the University of Victoria. No, we didn't need a formal invitation; in fact, one of the women that I was talking to said that any non-native person attending a "gathering" would never be turned away. She is only speaking for her people, the Sliammon people, who are near Powell River. However, I know that this attitude toward visitors is certainly true for any west coast native culture here in Canada and Washington State.

The head honcho running the Centre—it's been open for a few months already—said in his speech today that the official opening was to honour the various artists who helped create the building. Beautiful, it is, for when the natives build something, they do it right—lots of thought and art work go into making the building a work of art in itself. Hey, one of the carvers is reputedly a white man, Couz! Unless, of course, there was some native humour thrown in here that I missed...

First was a welcoming song from the Underwoods, native elders who are part of the tribe who traditionally dwelt in the UVic territory before us non-natives came in and took over. Next on the program was a group of drummers and singers made up of native peoples who are currently going to university here. Some are Coast Salish, like the Underwoods; others come from all across the continent. Imagine that; I had no idea that our university drew so many natives from all over.

All but the Coast Salish had to learn the four songs that were sung by this group. Just because you are native doesn't mean that you all speak and practice the same language and culture. I find that the drumming and singing from whatever native culture are addictive. I usually end up keeping time with my feet and singing along with the singers, whether I am singing mumbo jumbo or not. Their singing is always loud enough to drown me out, anyway. How I miss those cultural events from the years when I worked for our Tribal Council!

Alfred Waugh, the first nations' architect, originally from Yellowknife, gave the main speech of the morning. Incidentally, he was the first native person to graduate from the School of Architecture at UBC, and he's one heck of a lot younger than I am. He presently owns his own business, employing three other people.

Alfred is part Chipewyan, part Swedish and part "white," as he phrases it. His mother was a hunting guide. He comments that "her teachings are with us." Beginning to plan this building in 2003, Alfred mentioned that his focus, as chief architect, was to "mesh cultural identity with sustainable strategies." He spent a long time consulting with elders and holding workshops with others to determine what should be part of the building.

The celebration of this beautiful building apparently lasted all day. Unfortunately for us, we could only go for the morning. One of the later speakers was apparently going to be Martin Segger, a non-native from the Maltwood Gallery out at UVic.

It is obvious to me that our North American natives have far less problem than we do to bridge the gap between sustainability and our material "wants." Most of us still "don't get it." Native cultures are deeply tied to the land, and living in harmony within the creator's environment is traditionally more important for them than pillaging the resources that mother earth has to offer.



The building lies on an east-west direction. Mr. Waugh did not explain why that was important, but I believe that Asian cultures consider placement of buildings important too. There are two sets of welcoming poles; the outer two poles are carved with arms reaching outward, beckoning all to come in. There are wild plants growing on the roof and the building itself sits between the green space, where students apparently gather socially, and lecture rooms. Runoff from the water used—no Couz, not the toilets, the other stuff—is channelled down to the green space to keep things green. There's a fire pit outside so that gatherings can be held there in warm weather.

I laughed at the architect's comment: he was either criticized for the building being "too native" or "not native enough." To my way of thinking, he must be doing it right!

You know, Couz, I felt a little strange, being there this morning. I am used to small town native stuff where no one "dresses up," and here there were so many people who are used to the sophisticated social environment that the city offers. Also, I am used to Nuuchah-nulth drumming and singing. I must add, though, that nothing beats the Plains Indian drumming; you know the scene, where about eight guys sit around a huge drum and pound it to death while they sing their hearts out. It's pretty exciting if you've never listened to it before! It also would have been pretty scary to the non-native immigrants 100 years ago when the natives were still trying to defend their land.

Other thoughts went through my mind this morning. A recent news release concerning a research study showed that over 50% of natives living in the city want to continue to live in the city. They are used to "the good life." They don't want to go back to the reserves. Many have never lived on reserves. I wonder about their connection to the land. Do they not miss the smell of the earth, the ability to grow their own veggies, the freedom to pick some berries in a wild patch, the quiet, the chance of meeting others that they know as they walk down the main street? Are they eventually going to lose their connection with the land?

You ask me why the natives need a cultural centre at the university. Well, you'd need one too, if you lived in a native environment and then came down to the city to study. Couldn't all of us benefit from that kind of support in life when we move into such a different

environment? Coming from a small town to the city, I certainly could have used such a Centre. It's just that much harder for native students to adapt, for their culture is so very different to ours. This cultural shock is one of the many reasons why natives have such a huge school drop-out rate when they come from the reserve into a white environment. As my friend Ben David once commented, "...you have to be bi-cultural to survive it all."

Jennifer and her husband live in Victoria today.



Mother Earth and Morales the Defender

by Betty Krawczyk

Democracy Now (DemocracyNow.org) reports how Evo Morales, President of Bolivia, addressed a world referendum in his country on the effects of global warming (April 21, 2010) and Morales' words stunned me with their truth and purity.

And just in time.

For me, too many pieces of the puzzle were missing. Like why, oh why, do our own leaders hijack any real effective climate policies? And President Morales, an indigenous man of the people formulates a simple answer; it's because the only free thing our western leaders believe in is the free market. And in this free market so beloved by our government leaders and corporations lurks the vehicle which stupefies the body politic. And what is this major vehicle? It is the stun gun of capitalism which dictates that the personhood of corporations tops the personhood of real persons.

The superior personhood of corporations is truly a remarkable concept. It's why Stephen Harper can treat us like idiots. Why he can act like a god with no superior on earth or in heaven. Why Gordon Campbell feels protected by all of the forces of the universe. It's because they consider themselves part of the clique of the superior personhood of the corporations and furthermore, they revel in it. These men also know that the mother of all corporate personhoods, the private banks of Canada, at least in practice, trumps Mother Earth and all of nature. How? By drowning us in compound interest. Compound interest charged by private banks keep the rich shrieking in glee and the rest of us scratching.

But it has always been this way, hasn't it?

No. We actually have a public bank. It's called the Bank of Canada. It has the power to loan money to the Canadian government for all public expenditures. Without interest. Instead, at corporate insistence, the Bank of Canada loans the money (taxpayer's money) it takes to keep our country going, directly to the private banks first, who then loans it back to the government. And not with simple interest, but with compound interest.

So instead of taxpayers just paying directly for the government expenditures (transportation, infrastructure, and federal programs) we must also pay this original loan with compound interest. And all this compound interest money (taxpayers money again) of course now belongs to the private banks. This is why the private banks are so very rich and getting richer. And it's a global phenomenon. In order to pay back monstrous debts of compound interest governments have no choice but to give way to the bank corporations on all levels, environmentally, socially, and financially, just as at the moment, Greece is in the process of capitulating unless the people find the guts to revolt.

Bolivian President Evo Morales says the real enemy of Mother Earth is capitalism. I agree.

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The Advocate

by W. Robert Arnold

We are surrounded and bombarded by media of different sorts from TV to newspapers to signs on buses. They are all trying to sell us something. Goods, services, ideologies and ideas are being sold to all of us all of the time we are awake pretty nearly. The way we see the world and create an understanding of what is happening in it is coloured by media to which we are exposed. Because we are so affected by media, we must become more aware of what it is and be very critical in our analysis of it. Otherwise we will be controlled and enslaved by the powers behind the media and their program for us and our society.

I am going to write five articles on this theme for publication in the *Street Newz*, this being the first. In this one I would like to introduce the subject and address what media is. In the next look at who owns media and what agenda they are following. In the next one I would like to look more closely at how they promote that agenda. The fourth will delve into what we can do to protect ourselves from the influences we see as damaging to ourselves and our society. And, finally, I hope to acquaint you with alternatives to the mass media that challenge the hegemonic view of the world and introduce you to the possibility of all of us becoming journalists and sharing our world view and information about our interests instead of being made to swallow and support the interests of the owners of mass media and their friends.

So what is media? Media is the space between you and me and the world in which communication takes place. The technologies of mass media are things like TV, Radio, Newspapers, magazines and online news sources, to name just a few. They fill the space with stuff they want to communicate to us. All of it is sales. They are selling us stuff, services, attitudes, visions and dreams and much of it is not even true. There may be a grain of truth in some of it; but it is slanted in the way the owners and their friends want us to see it. Some of it is so skewed as to defy recognition as reality. This means we must be wary and aware when we are exposed to the mass media.

A good nose for bullshit is really important when dealing with media.

We must ask ourselves questions about what we read and hear through the media. What are they trying to sell me? Who will benefit if I believe it? What does it mean for how I think, feel and operate in society if I believe this? What are they asking me to do; or not to do? Will their message support the status quo, the way they tell me things are? Are things the way they say? Who will I hurt if I do not believe and act upon those beliefs?

Such questions will allow you to see the reality of the media message and decide for yourself how to accept or reject all or some of it. We are being fed media messages all the time. We must do like our mothers told us. Chew it well before swallowing.

Robert has fought poverty, his own and others, for over 45 years.



Tea Party Pledge

- I do solemnly swear to uphold the principles of a socialism-free society and heretofore pledge my word that I shall strictly adhere to the following:
- I will complain about the destruction of 1st Amendment Rights in this country, while I am duly being allowed to exercise my 1st Amendment Rights
- I will complain about the destruction of my 2nd Amendment Rights in this country, while I am duly being allowed to exercise my 2nd Amendment rights by legally but brazenly brandishing unconcealed firearms in public.
- I will forswear the time-honored principles of fairness, decency, and respect by screaming unintelligible platitudes regarding tyranny, Nazi-ism, and socialism at public town halls. Also, I pledge to eliminate all government intervention in my life.
- I will abstain from the use of and participation in any socialist goods and services including but not limited to the following:
- Social Security
 - Medicare/Medicaid
 - State Children’s Health Insurance Programs (CHIP)
 - Police, Fire, and Emergency Services
 - US Postal Service
 - Roads and Highways
 - Air Travel (regulated by the socialist FAA)
 - The US Railway System
 - Public Subways and Metro Systems
 - Public Bus and Lightrail Systems
 - Rest Areas on Highways
 - Sidewalks
 - All Government-Funded Local/State Projects
 - Public Water and Sewer Services (goodbye socialist toilet, shower, dishwasher, kitchen sink, outdoor hose!)
 - Public and State Universities and Colleges
 - Public Primary and Secondary Schools
 - Sesame Street
 - Publicly Funded Anti-Drug Use Education for Children
 - Public Museums, Libraries, Public Parks and Beaches
 - State and National Parks, Public Zoos
 - Unemployment Insurance
 - Municipal Garbage and Recycling Services
 - Treatment at Any Hospital or Clinic That Ever Received Funding From Local, State or Federal Government (pretty much all of them)
 - Medical Services and Medications That Were Created or Derived From Any Government Grant or Research Funding (again, pretty much all of them)
 - Socialist Byproducts of Government Investment Such as Duct Tape and Velcro (Nazi-NASA Inventions)
 - Use of the Internets, email, and networked computers, as the DoD’s ARPANET was the basis for subsequent computer networking
 - Foodstuffs, Meats, Produce and Crops That Were Grown With, Fed With, Raised With or That Contain Inputs From Crops Grown With Government Subsidies
 - Clothing Made from Crops (e.g. cotton) That Were Grown With or That Contain Inputs From Government Subsidies
 - If a veteran of the government-run socialist US military, I will forego my VA benefits and insist on paying for my own medical care
 - I will not tour socialist government buildings like the Capitol in Washington, D.C.

- I pledge to never take myself, my family, or my children on a tour of the following types of socialist locations, including but not limited to:
- Smithsonian Museums such as the Air and Space Museum or Museum of American History
 - The socialist Washington, Lincoln, and Jefferson Monuments
 - The government-operated Statue of Liberty
 - The Grand Canyon
 - The socialist World War II and Vietnam Veterans Memorials
 - The government-run socialist-propaganda location known as Arlington National Cemetery
 - All other public-funded socialist sites, whether in my state or in Washington, DC

I will urge my Member of Congress and Senators to forego their government salary and government-provided healthcare.

I will oppose and condemn the government-funded and therefore socialist military of the United States of America.

I will boycott the products of socialist defense contractors such as GE, Lockheed-Martin, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, General Dynamics, Raytheon, Humana, FedEx, General Motors, Honeywell, and hundreds of others that are paid by our socialist government to produce goods for our socialist army.

I will protest socialist security departments such as the Pentagon, FBI, CIA, Department of Homeland Security, TSA, Department of Justice and their socialist employees.

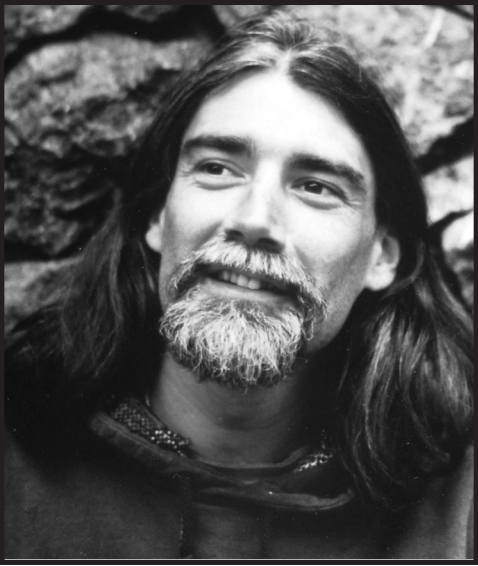
Upon reaching eligible retirement age, I will tear up my socialist Social Security cheques.

Upon reaching age 65, I will forego Medicare and pay for my own private health insurance until I die.

SWORN ON A BIBLE AND SIGNED THIS DAY OF _____ IN THE YEAR ____.

Goodbye Darcy

By cyann ray



While I have been to dozens of memorial services at The Open Door (now Our Place), it had been many years since I actually walked thru those doors. Today I reacquainted myself with that world and said my goodbyes to another fallen street brother. Darcy. He and I both got black puppies about 10 yrs ago. Kinda sad that his dog outlived him. But Darcy wasn’t sad & he always had a smile on his face and that seemed to be the general consensus of his street family.

Admittedly, I know nothing of Darcy’s roots, but I clearly saw who his family was at this service. Teary-eyed brothers & sisters, some a wee high, others quite drunk, filled the room. Once Rev. Al took to the podium, I sort of expected some degree of silence and order. I couldn’t be more wrong! What a gong show! And the Good Reverend was unflappable. Talk about having the patience of a saint! His flock that afternoon were not at their best, but a divine send off for Darcy did take place and I was so glad to be a part of it.

The street community grapevine is amazing, but having left that circle many moons ago, it was just by chance I had heard about this passing. I wonder just how many brothers and sisters leave us quietly, unknowingly. It was reassuring to see that Our Place provides a home and family for so many who need it.

I’m not a religious person but Rev. Al read from Corinthians 13:1-7 and I’ll just paraphrase here: We all have good and bad forces living within us. Who wins depends on who we feed the most. Sure made me think about how I feed the negativity living within. It’s so easy to see what’s wrong with this world when we suffer from pain, poverty or loneliness, or if we read the papers and keep up with the global condition.

If I learned anything today, it was to feed the good within. Maybe if we all did that, things would improve for everyone.

Capitalism: Through the Looking Glass

by Brian Mason

Capitalism is bad, right? It exploits both earth and workers with its voracious twin appetites for endless growth and profit maximization. Enough is never enough. It's an efficient, ever-pounding machine of plunder, a riotous celebration of pollution and greed. It's a race to the bottom for workers' wages (read Barbara Ehrenreich's Nickel and Dimed for a ground-level, personal account of trying to get by on a house cleaner's, a server's or a retail clerk's earnings in the USA) and a sprint to the top for quarterly profits. Without a conscience, a soul, nor even a spirit the capital of capitalism zips around the planet at digital speed, exploiting every niche, market and sweat shop it can sniff out. The system's innate inequality knows no limits, as the tiny number of rich capitalists at the top keep getting richer and everyone else slides downward. Capitalism: what's it good for, anyway? Just try on some word association for this monster: destructive, predatory, exploitative, marauding, merciless, conscienceless, relentless, ruthless, venal, plutocratic, restless, unforgiving, selfish ... There's more: capitalism is "anti" everything of communal value, like taxes, unions, regulations, moderation and balance. In Ehrenreich's words, we live "in the reign of globalized, totalized, paved-over, corporatized everything." I could go on.

Hold on a minute! That's not the way it is. Capitalism is good! It has generated the greatest explosion in wealth and prosperity, commodities and inventions, patents and progress in the history of civilisation. Look at all the stuff it has given us. It's amazing, and only the free market could have accomplished such a feat. Lifespans are up, birthrates down, terrible diseases have been eradicated, drinking water is clean and sparkling. Our supermarkets overflow with cheap, plentiful food. Everyone has a car and a big-screen, vacations in Mexico, an iPod. What's to complain about? If you don't like it, you're jealous; it simply means you're not doing as well as your neighbour or the folks you see around you – but you could be, if you just worked harder and smarter, like any good capitalist worth his Lexus. Anything else would be socialism, and we all know how bad it is. You could even become Canada's Warren Buffet, if you tried. After all, it's not called the free market because it has barriers. Get with the program!

Actually, I'm not sure. In fact, I hardly think about the system I live and work under, whether it's good or bad. I've got a job (no pension, though), government health care, a good neighbourhood public school for my kids. When I get up in the morning, I just trundle unquestioningly off to work, trying not to lift up my eyes too often to have a look around. Don't get me thinking. Besides what could I do about the situation, even if I thought we were all on a road to planetary ruin? I can't miss a car payment, skip a mortgage installment, or ignore my credit card bill. Then there are my kids to shuttle around to a million different lessons after school and all weekend. So give me a break; I just work here. Can't be bothered even to vote, let alone read up on the candidates and what they stand for – or against. Yeah, sure, I've seen all the homeless and heard the fish are disappearing; but, you know, I've got my niche and it ain't too bad, so don't expect me to show up on Earth Day.

But here's the rub, regardless of which camp you're in – capitalism is bad, good, or "I don't

know and I don't care, I just work here" – and it's a big one: no one has a clue about HOW to move our civilisation from where it is to a better, fairer place, even if she wanted to or thought we should try. Capitalism is all we have at the moment: No serious contender awaits at stage left. In fact, the Left was killed off several scenes ago. Free-market capitalism has become this gigantic, frolicking beast poised to devour the whole earth. We might all consider jumping ship if there actually were another one passing nearby, with a nice middle-class deck on it. Except there isn't. The social economy – you know, those co-operative, local, organic, fair trade, shade-grown affairs – has barely entered the frame. Serious reform, let alone revolution, is not waiting expectantly around the corner, or in many people's hearts, for that matter. Besides, people would want a smooth transition, small increments toward an unpromised land, not a big, disruptive jolt. And let me say it again: no one knows how to get to a place where the social economy would be predominant. Every one of us is too intimately and integrally bound up with the capitalist system to stray far from it on our own or in small pockets of resistance. It's got us ensnared.

As Thomas Frank writes in The Wrecking Crew, where he unfolds the frightening tale of how conservatives (wingers, as he calls them) got themselves and their cronies filthy rich in the process of wrecking and dismantling the US federal government, as "inequality widens, the clout of money will only grow more powerful." Which means we – because Harper and Campbell and the rest of the Canadian conservative wrecking crew are just as busy dismantling and privatizing government here – are in for a long haul, indeed. The winners of capitalism are wealthier now than they have ever been, are wielding their power to full advantage, making themselves even wealthier and further widening the gap of income inequality – while weakening, isolating or co-opting any upstart opposition they find on the fringes of our feverish society, especially other political parties and progressive labour unions. In Frank's words, we are in for "years of hard political work" if we want to rebuild a social-democratic society with nurturing, community-based values.

Does anyone have any good ideas, beyond switching from Starbucks to Solstice?

Submitted by Brian Mason, who lives in James Bay.

FROM HENRY DAVID THOREAU TO KATHY KELLY:

War Tax Resistance as a form of Civil Disobedience

by Gerry Bill

"What would you do if someone came to your door with a cup in hand asking for a contribution to help buy guns to kill a group of people they didn't like?"

Wally Nelson, war tax resister

"Let them march all they want, as long as they pay their taxes."

Alexander Haig U.S. Secretary of State, 1981-1982

Legend has it that when Henry David Thoreau was in jail for refusing to pay his taxes, his close friend Ralph Waldo Emerson visited him. "Henry, what are you doing in there?" Emerson asked. "Ralph, what are you doing out there?" Thoreau replied.

Thoreau was in jail because he had refused to pay a tax levied to finance the war against Mexico—a war that Thoreau, along with Emerson, Abraham Lincoln, and many others considered immoral. It was a war of conquest designed to take away approximately half of Mexico's territory, including this land on which we now stand. Should such wars be supported? Are wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which are clearly designed to establish US dominance in that region, really any different?

Thoreau's brush with the law over the war tax was one of the factors that led him to pen his famous essay "On Civil Disobedience." The continuing effects of that essay have undoubtedly far exceeded any expectations that Thoreau might have had. His essay greatly influenced, among others, Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Cesar Chavez—three of the people whose portraits we now proudly hang on the walls of the Fresno Center for Nonviolence.

Civil disobedience is based on principles of deliberate and open noncooperation with unjust practices foisted upon us by the powers that be. If we oppose the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan on moral principle, then the corollary to that principle demands that we find ways to withhold our cooperation with the war machine.

Some people decide that fighting in wars, especially unjust ones, is unconscionable and they refuse to participate; we call such people conscientious objectors. The same principle extends to those who believe that paying for an unjust war is unconscionable; they become war tax conscientious objectors.

During the Vietnam War era I became a conscientious objector to military service. At that time, which was also the era of the draft, I refused to pick up a gun to help further the US imperial agenda. In 2010 the imperial agenda continues, even under Obama.

What would be the best way for me to register my objection to US imperialism in the present day? There is no longer any draft, and I am too old to be drafted anyway.

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Indigenous women attend the closing ceremony of the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in Cochabamba April 22, 2010. Photo: REUTERS/David Mercado

Out of America's Prison/Slave System

by Tre Arrow

On June 8th, 2009, after almost 5 and a half years of incarceration, I was released from the prison walls of Herlong FCI (Federal Correctional Institution), California.

The sun was bursting with heat and brightness. While being driven to the Reno airport, I was filled with exhilaration, mixed with pangs of sadness when I thought of all I've missed, all that's happened while I've been conveniently tucked away.

My friends greeted me at the Portland airport. I was flooded with raw vegan food, spring water in glass bottles, flowers and lots of hugs and smiles! I was elated to be back home. We all hopped onto our bikes and rode to my new "prison"... the Oregon Halfway House (OHH).

Early in the morning, on the 8th of June, I was a prisoner at Herlong. By the afternoon, I was a passenger traveling in an airplane, unsupervised and unshackled. And in the evening of the very same day, I reported to OHH and was placed under lockdown. I was not even allowed to go outside for the first 24 hours. I was both excited and utterly distressed to be back in Stumptown. On one hand I had a taste of freedom and a reunion with loved ones; and on the other hand I was placed on a leash and only allowed to enjoy a small amount of privileges and freedoms of which I had been deprived for so long.

On Wednesday, June 10th, I was permitted a four-hour pass to go food shopping and to look for work. I went straight to People's Food Co-op and the Farmer's Market. As I walked there from the bus stop I noticed all the trees and fruit bursting from their branches. Feelings of happiness and gratitude overwhelmed me as I hugged a massive Douglas Fir tree. It was the first tree I had touched in more than five years! I was so thankful to be in Stumptown in the summer. I savored this new taste of freedom. It was surreal for me to leave OHH on an "approved pass" traveling freely through the city while still being treated by "the Man" as a prisoner. I felt both relief and anxiety in the same breath.

For the next three and a half months I lived at OHH with very few freedoms. I was not even permitted to play my guitar outside. I was assigned cleaning bathrooms as part of my "chores." I had to acquire permission to travel anywhere, and I was not allowed to go beyond the limits of the city. I was approved to leave OHH only to look for work and acquire a few basic necessities, like food and hygiene products. The OHH management allows one four-hour pass per week for religious purposes and one four-hour pass per week for the gym ... I went to the Buddhist Temple and the Yoga studio.

In July, I started working at the Blossoming Lotus; an awesome, vegan organic restaurant on NE 15th and Broadway. I was required to give 30% of my income to OHH, even though I wasn't eating any of their food. On September 25th, 2009, I was permitted to move into home-confinement at an approved residence in SE Portland (after background checks were conducted on the people I would be living with). Even though I was no longer living at OHH I was forced to continue the payment of 30% of my income. What a great money-making scheme for the injustice-system.

Living under home confinement status was certainly more pleasurable than living at any of the prisons or the OHH. Yet I was still under intense restrictions. I had a 9 pm to 6 am curfew. I was allowed no more passes to leave my house than when I was at OHH. I had an electronic monitoring system strapped to my ankle. In addition to this, I had to call OHH every time I left from, and returned to, the house. I also had to fill out a form each week and submit it to the case manager. This form listed times I would be at a location, the address and

phone number of that location and the time I'd be returning to the house. I was expected to have the exact schedule every week for the remainder of my home-confinement (2 and a half months), and was not permitted to travel to any locations that weren't on the initial weekly form.

Finally, on December 4th, 2009, after almost 6 years of entrapment by the prison industrial complex, I was freed from the Bureau of Prisons' custody. That night I spent my first night of true freedom nestled in a hammock 40 feet above the ground in an big hemlock tree that lives at Tryon Life Community Farm. The next day I participated in my first protest in many, many years. I was thrilled to be at the D5 rally and march, commemorating the 10 year anniversary of the WTO protests in 1999.

The next week I traveled to Florida to visit family. It was the first time I was able to hug my father in almost 9 years!

The transition from prison back into the community was not easy because of the restrictions and requirements placed upon me. Today I am still not permitted to leave the state without permission and will be on probation until December 2012. It has inspired me to focus on post-prisoner support for those being released from one of the biggest tragedies of our social, political, economic systems. In this country we incarcerate a higher percentage of our populace than any other nation in the world. Most prisoners in America are non-white, not wealthy, and not convicted of any violent crime.

This system in which we are entrenched is about making money. It is not about justice. It is not about freedom. Many of the politicians and corporate leaders in this country are responsible for some of the most abominable acts against humans, non-human animals and this sacred planet. These people never spend a day in prison.

People ask me what it was like in prison, how I stayed sane and how I found strength to persevere in the face of drastic oppression and isolation. Prison life, with all its components of abuse, violence, oppression, deprivation, harassment (both from other prisoners and the staff) and psychological and emotional warfare, was the toughest experience I've ever been through.

I did make some friends along the way. Fellow prisoners would ask me what they could do to be more environmentally conscious, the philosophy behind eating a vegan diet and how and what to recycle and reuse the items we had in prison. Some guys would bring me scrap paper, knowing I'd use the backs of it for my writing. I'd acquire used batteries from other prisoners and power my radio, which I procured used from my cellmate, and have access to music. I listened to or practiced music as much as I possibly could. Music feeds my soul and literally kept me sane while surrounded by intense hostility, animosity and asinine prison politics. Music was a form of escape that transported me to many past memories of precious experiences that offered a place of safety and comfort amidst the pool of uncertainty and distress I was swimming in.

When I was able, I'd kick off my shoes and stick my feet in the dirt or grass. Getting this direct contact with Earth Mother gave me solace and a channel to reconnect with the greater meaning of this incarceration. I was looking at a life sentence for burning logging trucks, where no living being was hurt, and had no reassurances that I was ever going to get out of prison. Nonetheless, I had a deep sense that I was going to be released much sooner than later. I practiced yoga and attended regular native healing ceremonies in order to stay connected to my spiritual path, which gave me the needed strength to make it through years of deprivation and distress.



I give an enormous serving of gratitude to all who supported me while I was imprisoned. People who sent letters, prayers and energy; those who became my legal defense team; my lawyers; my family (especially my sister Shawna), have all contributed untold hours of time, devotion and energy ... I give my deepest appreciation for all the support that truly kept me alive and strong during some of the most difficult challenges I've ever endured.

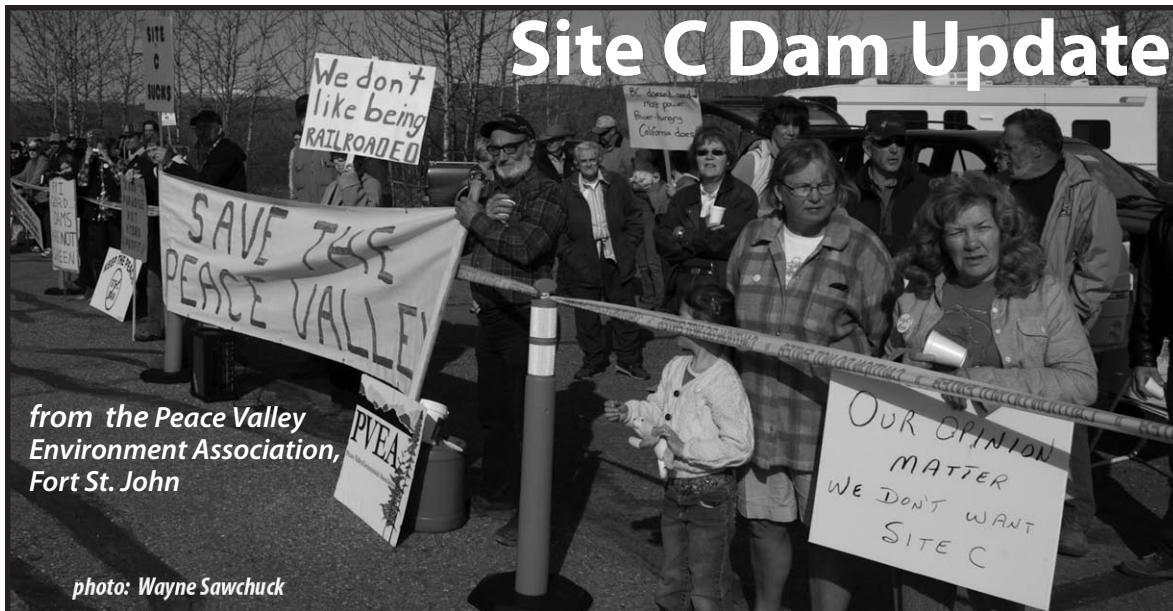
This experience has only made me stronger. I will not be silent! I will continue to be a voice for those voices commonly ignored. I'm committed to dedicating my life to music and activism. I'm very excited to combine my energy and passion with others to help bring about a more healthy, just, peaceful and egalitarian world... for us, for our children, for all beings, plant or animal, human or non-human. This is my truth. This is my passion and this will always be!

Here are just a few things to contemplate and integrate into your daily activities that make an enormous impact on this sacred earth:

Bike or walk or bus or row your way around. Don't believe that bio fuels are a healthy alternative to our dependency on oil. Grow your own food and support local, organic, sustainable agriculture. Don't believe that genetically modified organisms (GMO's) and Monsanto are solving the global hunger problem. Build homes, businesses and structures from reclaimed/reused materials, cob, straw bail or adobe. Don't believe that ancient forests deserve to be cut for "their own health" and turned into butt-wipe and building materials. Eat a plant-based diet. Don't believe that cows, chickens and pigs are treated well or are healthy for our bodies or the planet. Organize, network, educate and build strong communities. Don't believe we need politicians or corporations to tell us how to live, work, shop, feel or think. Bring your own bags and containers to stores and restaurants, buy in bulk and reuse all that is possible. Don't believe that recycling is a sustainable or acceptable way to deal with our waste, packaging and consumption. Dare to buy less! Don't believe there is any lasting happiness to be found in monetary wealth or material acquisition.

The time is upon us to take back our power from the powers that lie, cheat and steal. The time is now to take action and protect the planet, our rights, our freedoms from the grips of power and avarice. It's high time we put the "eco" back into the word "economy." The time is now to use our voices, passion, creativity, bodies and collective energies to effect positive change for all living beings on this precious planet. If not now, then when? If not me and you, then who?

Site C Dam Update



from the Peace Valley
Environment Association,
Fort St. John

photo: Wayne Sawchuck

Gordon Campbell is doing an end-run on democracy and good government.

In football, an end-run is a play in which the ball carrier attempts to run around one end of the defensive line. Wikipedia lists a second definition of the term as “a manoeuvre in which impediments are bypassed, often by deceit or trickery.”

The proposed Site C dam has been rejected twice by the BC Utilities Commission (BCUC), in the 70s and again in the 80s. Clearly, a new play was needed. So, when Mr. Campbell's government released its Clean Energy Act last week, news that Site C would be exempt from BCUC review wasn't a surprise to anyone following the game.

Gordon Campbell might need a new quarterback. Despite long-standing geotechnical concerns about the ability of the soil in the Peace River valley to support a 60 m high earth-fill dam, Energy Minister Blair Lekstrom was quoted as saying “he will not wait for detailed engineering and environmental studies before choosing whether or not to proceed with the proposed Site C dam on the Peace River” (Vancouver Sun, 16 Apr 2010).

Schools and hospitals are being sacked all around around the province [ostensibly] for lack of funding, yet Mr. Campbell's team is trying to ram Site C through, throwing good money after the over \$40 million worth of bad money spent on BC Hydro's Site C pseudo-consultation process. And it's our money he's playing with.

Unfortunately, it's beginning to look like Mr. Campbell's game could be fixed with a little help from the Feds. A project of this magnitude - flooding over 80 km of major

river valley, harmful alteration and destruction of fish habitat, destruction of SARA-listed species habitat, the damming of a navigable river that crosses inter-provincial boundaries -- has traditionally resulted in a number of federal environmental assessment (EA) triggers. However, recently there's been talk of regulation changes that would allow the federal government to substitute the provincial EA process (Globe and Mail, 31 Mar 2010). The track record of the provincial EA process is well known -- British Columbia's EA system could single-handedly support a rubber stamp factory.

If Mr. Campbell fumbles his expected attempt to bypass the federal EA process, he will likely seek a harmonized federal and provincial EA. Similar to his BCUC end-run, he may push for a process that has all effective regulatory safeguards for the protection of the public and the environment “streamlined” out, with no unbiased experts running interference for his plans. Given the magnitude of this project and its substantial environmental impacts, the Canadian environmental assessment should include a full federal review panel that is independent of the provincial EA.

Citizens of British Columbia may have to look to First Nations people to carry the ball. Just as we are required to abide by conditions agreed to in modern-day treaties, such as NAFTA, the government of Canada has an obligation to respect the rights granted First Nations under Treaty Eight. As Roland Willson, Chief of the West Moberly First Nations, has said “We will do everything we can to fight this thing.”

Premier Campbell cannot ignore the strong voices of the First Nations. And in the end, that will likely be the game-changer.

War Tax Resistance ... continued from page 6

The way for me to register my conscientious objection to our government's current actions is to withhold the portion of my taxes that goes for war.

Of course this action may involve some personal risk. However, I believe that failing to act poses a far greater risk -- not to me personally, but to my descendants, to the rest of the human population, and to the future of our planet. If I am to calculate the effect of my actions unto the seventh generation, I have no choice but to remove my support from the war machine.

I should point out that war tax resistance is not an all or nothing proposition. Some people refuse to pay any of their taxes at all. In my case I will withhold 50%, the approximate proportion that goes for war. Some people, such as Kathy Kelly, withhold a symbolic amount like \$100. She is encouraging others to do the same by joining the War Tax Boycott Campaign.

“What does the U.S. government want from us in order to fight this war? For most of us, the government doesn't want our bodies, and it doesn't even want our consent. What the government wants from us is our money. We can each resist \$100 for one year. The consequences would not be so cataclysmic if the IRS caught up with you, and we can pool all of the refused war tax money and give it to survivors of Katrina and people who have fled from violence in Iraq.”

Kathy Kelly, anti-war activist

As Kelly is pointing out in that quote, she, as well as most tax resisters, do not pocket the money that they refuse to send to the government. Instead, they use it to support projects that contribute to the common good. I will be doing the same.

Of course the government will eventually take the unpaid tax money from me, along with penalties and interest. However, it may well cost them even more to collect it in that way than they actually receive from collecting it. In any case, my objection will have been clearly registered. I can do no other.

For more information on war tax resistance go to www.nwtrcc.org, or to www.warresisters.org. To join the War Tax Boycott go to www.wartaxboycott.org. In Canada, check www.consciencecanada.ca.

Gerry Bill is a board member of the Fresno Free College Foundation KFCF 88.1 FM, and of the Fresno Centre for Nonviolence. He has recently retired from Fresno City College where he taught sociology and American studies, and he's vegan.

HEADS UP

The G20 summit, related rallies and protests, will be in Toronto the last week of June.



E~merging Beyond

a new mediation/conflict-resolution service.

Pashta MaryMoon trained in Mediation/Third-party Intervention through both the Institute for Conflict Analysis and the Justice Institute of B.C., and she is a general member of the South Island Dispute Resolution Centre (www.disputeresolution.bc.ca).

Pashta uses a Transformative and/or Interest-based Mediation style -- developing innovative ways to resolve conflicts between individuals that honour their personal values, beliefs, feelings and needs. Resolutions, woven from these qualities, are more likely to both be genuinely workable (re the specific problem) and provide a foundation for resolving any further conflicts in the future. They are based -- not on compromise or coercion -- but the best possible 'win-win' result for all involved.

E~merging Beyond's particular focus is on interpersonal conflict resolution within small social-concerns non-profit organizations, and families dealing with 'end of life' issues -- but is open to mediation in other situations as well. Rates are kept low for accessibility to those with little funding. Pashta is not certified to deal with legal/litigation cases referred to mediation by the law courts.

For further information check www.emerging-beyond.ca, write to contact@emerging-beyond.ca or phone Pashta at 250-383-4065.

Mark your calendar and plan to attend the fifth annual Paddle for the Peace on Saturday, July 10, 2010.

This event is sponsored by the Peace Valley Environment Association and the West Moberly First Nations.

For more information check www.paddleforthepeace.ca or www.peacevalley.ca, or contact pvea@shaw.ca.



Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth

The First World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth (WPCCC) took place April 19-22 near Cochabamba, Bolivia. It was initiated after the big guns failed to establish any significant agreements in Copenhagen last December. Over 30,000 world citizens attended Bolivia's conference, which proposed various solutions including a Climate Justice Tribunal, a Global Referendum, and this Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth. This Cochabamba Accord will be presented at the United Nations Cancun climate summit in December.

Preamble

We, the peoples and nations of Earth:

considering that we are all part of Mother Earth, an indivisible, living community of interrelated and interdependent beings with a common destiny; gratefully acknowledging that Mother Earth is the source of life, nourishment and learning and provides everything we need to live well;

recognizing that the capitalist system and all forms of depredation, exploitation, abuse and contamination have caused great destruction, degradation and disruption of Mother Earth, putting life as we know it today at risk through phenomena such as climate change;

convinced that in an interdependent living community it is not possible to recognize the rights of only human beings without causing an imbalance within Mother Earth;

affirming that to guarantee human rights it is necessary to recognize and defend the rights of Mother Earth and all beings in her and that there are existing cultures, practices and laws that do so;

conscious of the urgency of taking decisive, collective action to transform structures and systems that cause climate change and other threats to Mother Earth; proclaim this Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth, and call on the General Assembly of the United Nation to adopt it, as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations of the world, and to the end that every individual and institution takes responsibility for promoting through teaching, education, and consciousness raising, respect for the rights recognized in this Declaration and ensure through prompt and progressive measures and mechanisms, national and international, their universal and effective recognition and observance among all peoples and States in the world.

Article 1. Mother Earth

- (1) Mother Earth is a living being.
- (2) Mother Earth is a unique, indivisible, self-regulating community of interrelated beings that sustains, contains and reproduces all beings.
- (3) Each being is defined by its relationships as an integral part of Mother Earth.
- (4) The inherent rights of Mother Earth are inalienable in that they arise from the same source as existence.
- (5) Mother Earth and all beings are entitled to all the inherent rights recognized in this Declaration without distinction of any kind, such as may be made between organic and inorganic beings, species, origin, use to human beings, or any other status.
- (6) Just as human beings have human rights, all other beings also have rights which are specific to their species or kind and appropriate for their role and function within the communities within which they exist.
- (7) The rights of each being are limited by the rights of other beings and any conflict between their rights must be resolved in a way that maintains the integrity, balance and health of Mother Earth.

Article 2. Inherent Rights of Mother Earth

- (1) Mother Earth and all beings of which she is composed have the following inherent rights:
 - (a) the right to life and to exist;
 - (b) the right to be respected;
 - (c) the right to regenerate its bio-capacity and to continue its vital cycles and processes free from human disruptions;
 - (d) the right to maintain its identity and integrity as a distinct, self-regulating and interrelated being;
 - (e) the right to water as a source of life;
 - (f) the right to clean air;
 - (g) the right to integral health;
 - (h) the right to be free from contamination, pollution and toxic or radioactive waste;
 - (i) the right to not have its genetic structure modified or disrupted in a manner that threatens its integrity or vital and healthy functioning;
 - (j) the right to full and prompt restoration the violation of the rights recognized in this Declaration caused by human activities;
- (2) Each being has the right to a place and to play its role in Mother Earth for her harmonious functioning.
- (3) Every being has the right to wellbeing and to live free from torture or cruel treatment by human beings.

Article 3. Obligations of human beings to Mother Earth

- (1) Every human being is responsible for respecting and living in harmony with Mother Earth.
- (2) Human beings, all States, and all public and private institutions must:
 - (a) act in accordance with the rights and obligations recognized in this Declaration;
 - (b) recognize and promote the full implementation and enforcement of the rights and obligations recognized in this Declaration;

- (c) promote and participate in learning, analysis, interpretation and communication about how to live in harmony with Mother Earth in accordance with this Declaration;
- (d) ensure that the pursuit of human wellbeing contributes to the wellbeing of Mother Earth, now and in the future;
- (e) establish and apply effective norms and laws for the defence, protection and conservation of the rights of Mother Earth;
- (f) respect, protect, conserve and where necessary, restore the integrity, of the vital ecological cycles, processes and balances of Mother Earth;
- (g) guarantee that the damages caused by human violations of the inherent rights recognized in this Declaration are rectified and that those responsible are held accountable for restoring the integrity and health of Mother Earth;
- (h) empower human beings and institutions to defend the rights of Mother Earth and of all beings;
- (i) establish precautionary and restrictive measures to prevent human activities from causing species extinction, the destruction of ecosystems or the disruption of ecological cycles;
- (j) guarantee peace and eliminate nuclear, chemical and biological weapons;
- (k) promote and support practices of respect for Mother Earth and all beings, in accordance with their own cultures, traditions and customs;
- (l) promote economic systems that are in harmony with Mother Earth and in accordance with the rights recognized in this Declaration.

Article 4. Definitions

- (1) The term "being" includes ecosystems, natural communities, species and all other natural entities which exist as part of Mother Earth.
- (2) Nothing in this Declaration restricts the recognition of other inherent rights of all beings or specified beings.



Fascinating Insights from a Thinking American

by Gordon Pollard

(First of Two Parts)

When former professional wrestler Jesse Ventura was elected governor of Minnesota in 1998, I, and probably millions of others, thought he would provide little more than a bit of comic relief. But we could not have been more wrong. Ventura has, in fact, turned out to be one of the most intelligent, progressive populists ever to appear on the American political stage.

In an extraordinarily perceptive and courageous new book, American Conspiracies, Ventura says most Americans “have had their heads buried in the sand” for decades while the military and the big banks and corporations have seized de facto control of the U.S. government.

Working in collaboration with award-winning author Dick Russell, Ventura declares, with characteristic down-to-earth bluntness, that the U.S. now finds itself “in deep shit” largely because the mainstream media hardly ever tell the public the truth about what is really going on.

“The fact is,” Ventura says, “the media – the fourth branch of government that our founding fathers anticipated would speak truth to power and keep our democracy on track – has, at least since the assassination of President Kennedy, systematically ignored any ‘conspiracy theory’ that might rock the establishment’s boat ... Clearly there’s something going on in our national psyche that the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* don’t want to examine I’m tired of being told that anybody who questions the status quo is part of the disaffected, alienated element of our society that ought to wake up and salute the flag. Maybe being patriotic is about raising the curtain and wondering whether we’ve really been told the truth about things like September 11th.”

To illustrate his point, Ventura cites 14 examples of incidents in U.S. history over the past century and a half. His presentation on each incident is detailed and well documented with extensive footnotes and includes a very useful resource list for more detailed reading on each topic. We will take a look at six of the examples cited by Ventura, three in this article and three more in the July edition of Street Newz.

Ventura believes not only U.S. citizens but people around the world deserve honest answers to a number of key questions, including:

1. What Really Happened on September 11th, 2001?

Ventura says it is now clear to any honest, independent person who studies this issue that the government’s official report on what occurred that day (when two hijacked airplanes crashed into the Twin Towers, another crashed in a field in Pennsylvania and a fourth allegedly hit the Pentagon) is “a total whitewash.”

“My take,” he says, “is that our government engaged in a massive cover-up of what really happened, including its own ties to the hijackers. Unanswered questions remain about how the towers were brought down and whether a plane really struck the Pentagon. The Bush administration either knew about the plan and allowed it to proceed or they had a hand in it themselves.”

In his chapter on 9/11, Ventura presents much of the same evidence we outlined in our four-part series, “9/11 – One of History’s Greatest Frauds” (Street Newz, July-October, 2009). But he also provides additional evidence. This includes, for example, an astonishingly candid statement by John Farmer, senior counsel to the 9/11 commission, who revealed in a book he wrote recently that “at some level of the government, at some point in time ... there was an agreement not to tell the truth about what happened.”

Ventura also cites a research paper on the collapse of the Twin Towers written by nine scientists headed by Dr. Niels Harrit of the University of Copenhagen’s chemistry department and published in the April, 2009, edition of *Open Chemical Physics Journal*. In examining dust samples from the site, these scientists found chips of

nano thermite, a highly incendiary explosive. The study concluded that the towers were almost certainly brought down by controlled demolition.

In addition, there is an interview with retired U.S. Air Force Colonel George Nelson, who served for many years on the Air Force’s aircraft accident investigation board. “On the basis of all the evidence,” Colonel Nelson says, “any unbiased rational investigator could only conclude that a Boeing 75 did not fly into the Pentagon as alleged.”

Ventura says perhaps the biggest lie of all that the government and media have been telling about 9/11 is their claim that the only people questioning the official version of what happened are “a few cranks and nutbars.” The mainstream media don’t report, for example, that 1,200 engineers and architects from all over the world have now signed a petition calling for a new investigation into 9/11 because they don’t believe it was physically possible for the Twin Towers and Building 7 to have come down in the way the authorities claim.

“In fact,” Ventura notes, “the 9/11 Truth Movement has a growing number of groups: political leaders, architects and engineers, firefighters, lawyers, medical professionals, pilots, religious leaders, scholars, scientists, journalists and veterans. Check it out online and get involved, as I have. Our nation will never be able to truly move forward until we have an honest investigation and get to the bottom of what really happened on September 11th, 2001.

2. Who Really Assassinated President John Kennedy?

Ventura notes that hardly anyone still believes the claim by the notorious Warren Commission that “a lone isolated nut” named Lee Harvey Oswald killed President Kennedy in Dallas, Texas, on November 22nd, 1963.

“The JFK murder,” Ventura says, “involved the biggest government cover-up in my lifetime. The evidence clearly shows that a gunman other than Oswald assassinated the president from the grassy knoll. Oswald was set up as the fall guy. The perpetrators behind Oswald were tied into the CIA, the Pentagon and the Mob, along with right-wing extremists who tried to make it look like Cuba was behind it. Oswald himself was part of an intelligence operation that involved a look-alike ‘double.’”

Ventura reviews the long litany of physical and photographic evidence as well as eyewitness testimony which clearly shows that Oswald certainly couldn’t have acted alone and quite likely didn’t even fire a single shot that day.

For example, Ventura says: “What about the so-called ‘magic bullet’ that moved all around and caused seven separate wounds in President Kennedy and Governor Connally? When this bullet just happened to turn up on a stretcher at Dallas’s Parkland Hospital, there weren’t any bloodstains on it. Although the bullet appeared to be undamaged, the one that hit Connally left behind some permanent lead in his wrist. According to Dr. Cyril Wecht, former President of the American Academy of Forensic Scientists, these two facts simply don’t add up. Without the ‘magic bullet,’ the idea that Oswald killed the president falls apart.”

So few people believed the ridiculous “evidence” presented by the Warren Commission and there were so many calls for a new, honest investigation that a special committee of the U.S. House of Representatives eventually looked into the matter in 1978 and concluded that the president “was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy.”

Astonishingly, however, as Ventura notes, most of the “big media” continue to peddle the Warren Commissions’ “Oswald-was-the-long-gunman” story to this day even though it was officially rejected by a congressional committee and practically no one still believes it. It is truly pathetic how the establishment media (including the *New York Times*, CBC etc.) keep telling us, in effect, that the horse is still in the barn even though we can all clearly see

it prancing across the field.

3. Who Really Assassinated Senator Robert Kennedy?

At first glance, when Senator Robert Kennedy was assassinated in the pantry of the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles on June 5th, 1968, there seemed to be no question that the murder had been carried out by “a lone gunman.” Sirhan Sirhan, a young Palestinian, fired several shots from a few feet in front of Kennedy while many horrified witnesses looked on. But, as is often the case in history, there was much more to the story than there seemed to be at first glance.

According to the official version, Sirhan was the only person who fired a gun in the pantry that night. But that couldn’t possibly be true. Acoustics expert Philip Van Praag analyzed a recording made at the scene by a reporter and determined that a total of 13 shots were fired. Sirhan’s gun held only eight bullets and he obviously had no time to reload.

Moreover, Los Angeles County Coroner Thomas Noguchi reported that the fatal shot had come from behind Kennedy and had been fired from a gun that was not more than an inch from his head. Clearly it couldn’t have been fired by Sirhan who was at all times in front of Kennedy and several feet away from him.

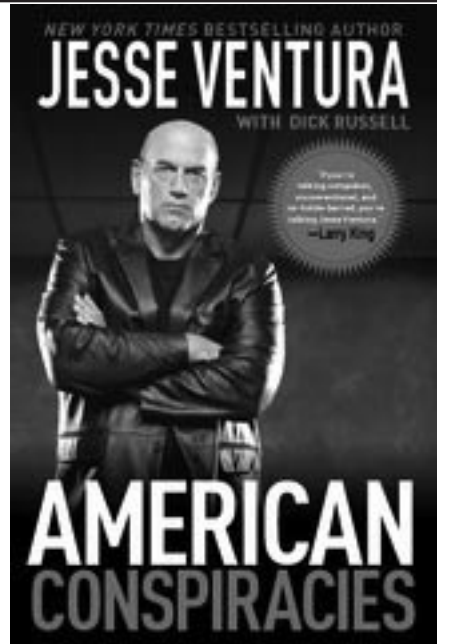
Almost certainly, the fatal shot was actually fired by a fellow named Thane Eugene Cesar, who had been hired by the Ambassador Hotel as a part-time security guard only a few days earlier. Several witnesses noticed Cesar standing directly behind Kennedy holding a gun and one witness even said he saw Cesar fire it. Not surprisingly, however, Cesar was never questioned by the authorities, who immediately claimed they had an open-and-shut case against Sirhan as the “lone assassin.” Everyone was supposed to believe this assassination had been carried out by another “lone isolated nut.”

Ventura also points out that even to this day Sirhan doesn’t have any memory of firing a gun that night. “Even at his trial,” Ventura notes, “lawyers wondered whether he had been ‘programmed’ through hypnosis or drugs. There has been speculation that Sirhan may have been part of MK-ULTRA, a grim CIA program to control human behaviour – but, unfortunately, the agency destroyed almost all of the records of that program in 1973.”

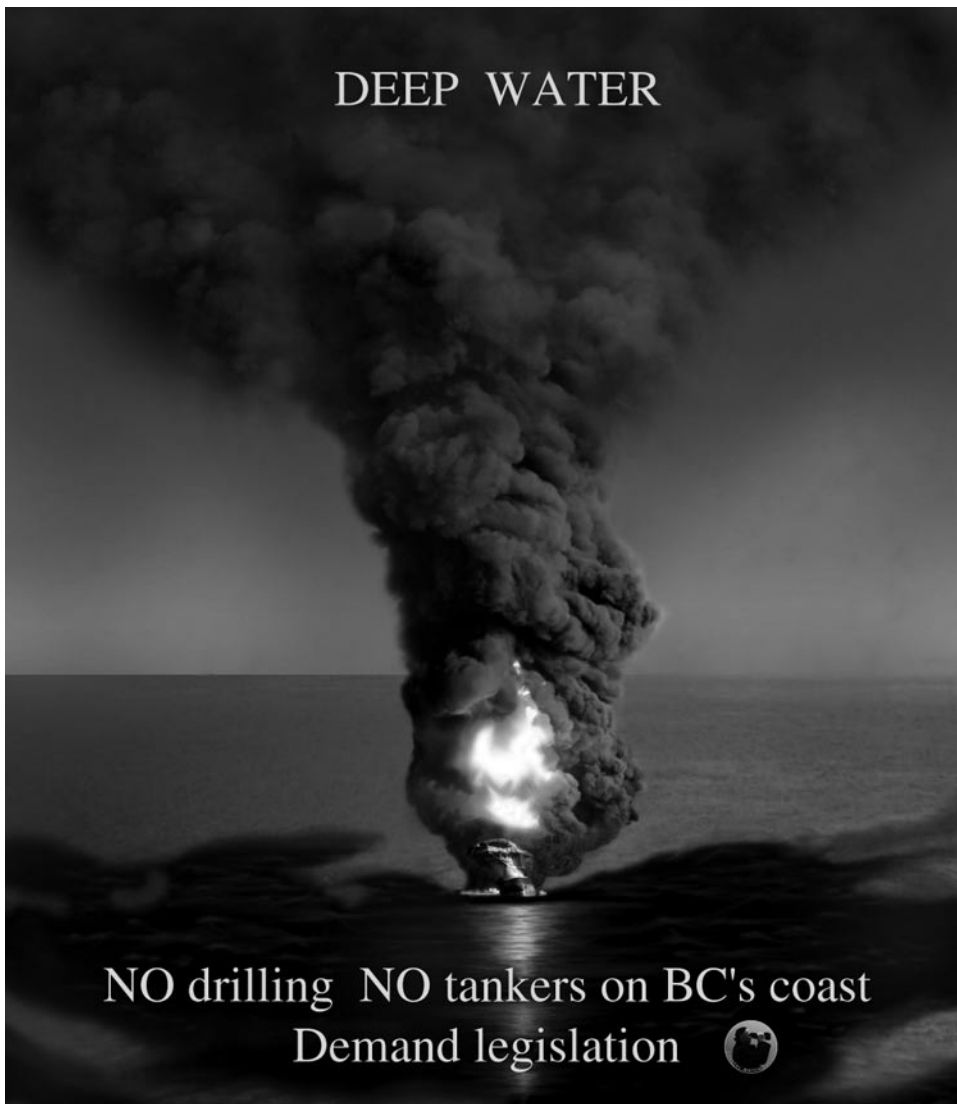
Though 42 years have passed since Bobby Kennedy was murdered, Ventura believes it is still important that we demand to be told the truth about what really happened on June 5th, 1968, since the assassination was one of the pivotal events of modern history. “I think it’s safe to say,” observes Ventura, “that had Bobby Kennedy lived, we’d have a different kind of country than what we’ve become.”


In the July edition of *Street Newz* we will look at three more of the topics Ventura discusses in his book: how the 2000 and 2004 U.S. presidential elections were stolen and how the 2008 election was almost stolen, how a cabal of U.S. business tycoons tried to overthrow the president and set up a fascist government in the U.S. in 1934, and how the U.S. publicly wages a “war on drugs” but secretly engages in global drug trafficking. (*To be concluded in July*)

Gordon Pollard is a native of Victoria with a MA in History from Columbia University in New York City and a BA in History and English from the University of Victoria. After working for 10 years as a journalist in B.C., Alberta, and Ontario, Gordon spent 20 years teaching English and History in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka.



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BY WOODY

Medical Arts Bldg Restaurant under new Management

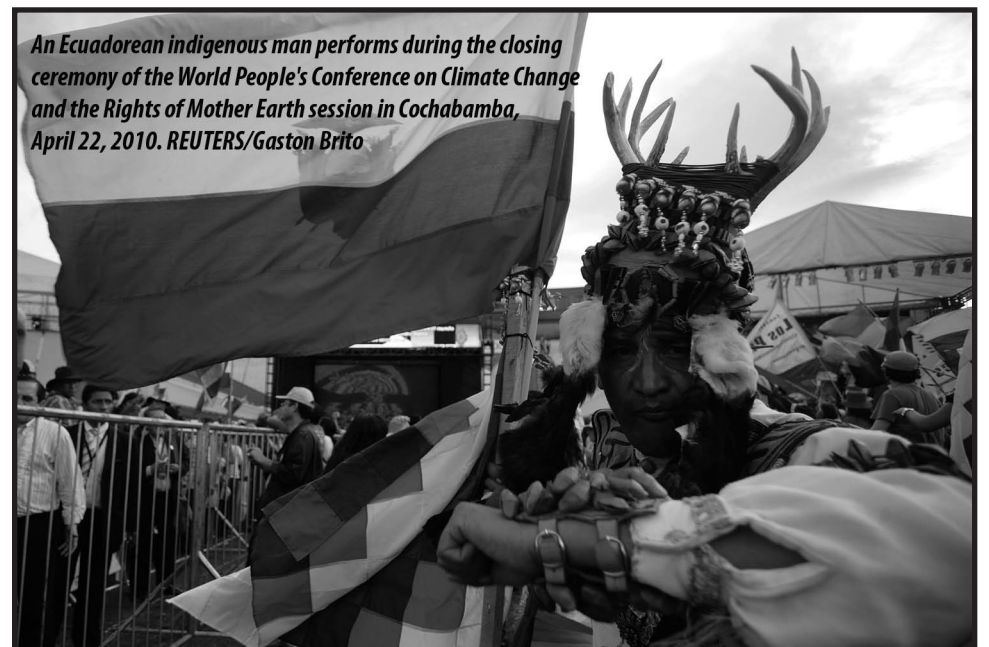
Denizens of Harris Green will be interested to know that our cherished restaurateur and patron of the arts, Barbara Julian, has taken over this nice little spot. She is offering gourmet coffee, and vegetarian fare. Lunches are based on a hearty soup.

Half the space has been converted into a bookshop specializing in B.C. authors, and the walls are bright with colourful works for sale by local artists. There are also holders for brochures supporting good causes...activists take note.

This is a wonderful spot to take time out from the rat race, or the grinding struggle against the unholy alliance formed by our federal and provincial mafiosi.

The restaurant is now renamed *The Overleaf Café*, and is kitty corner from Wellburns at Cook and Pandora.

by Don Startin



An Ecuadorean indigenous man performs during the closing ceremony of the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth session in Cochabamba, April 22, 2010. REUTERS/Gaston Brito

Princess Street

The long shadows cast by the power poles stretch from curb to curb; the city bus hums from stop to stop like an enormous bumble bee and an empty cola bottle rattles uphill, blown by the breath of the streets. The trees are stone cold still and so am I.

Watching the sun set across the bumpy Esquimalt skyline makes me tenuous. My ears twitch like a horse's would twitch, before a thunder storm sucks up the air on some golden prairie. My feet move without moving. My eyes stare without staring. My heart beats without feeling. I am alone.

For a little while, time becomes imperceptibly large and the evening pours into the city like molten clay: heavy and warm, molding to the souls of the people. Night is coming.

Up the block, people buzz to and from the dope house and two men lean on the back of a cream Oldsmobile. One of them could be you. The distance fuels my imagination and I almost believe myself. He leans like you used to lean: one leg propped behind the other, toe bent, heel up, forehead slightly tilted skywards like an Egyptian king. You always held yourself back a bit, like you were leaning away from the edge of a cliff.

I guess you can tell a lot about a person by how they stand.
Em

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